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ABSTRACT

This is a compilation of the Executive Summaries from several documents: "Professional Development District Team Survey Results" (July 1997), "CSL Assessment Training Survey Results" (January 1999), "CSL Assessment Professional Development Evaluation Additional Data Analysis of District Surveys" (February 1999); "1998-99 CSL Assessment Site Visit Results" (June 1999); "1998-99 CSL Assessment District Contact Interview Results" (September 1999); and "The Washington Professional Development Program in Assessment Literacy, Final Report" (May 2000). The Washington Assessment Professional Development Program was designed to promote the effective use of high-quality state and classroom assessments throughout the state of Washington. Since 1995, Assessment Training Centers have operated in intermediate service districts and other already established entities in Washington. The professional development model emphasized pass-through training of trainers and locally situated collaborative learning teams. The program depended on several formal and informal means of gathering information to evaluate its processes and impact. These included: (1) standard evaluation forms completed at workshops; (2) records of numbers and types of services; (3) ongoing informal collection of data; and (4) two formal evaluations of program impact in 1996-1997 and 1998-1999. In the 1996-1997 evaluation, paper-and-pencil surveys were sent to 11 Assessment Center directors, 66 staff members, more than 247 assessment contacts, and 370 principals. From responses on these surveys, 20 training contacts were chosen for telephone interviews in the 1998-1999 evaluation. Site visits were conducted during both evaluations. Results of both evaluations indicate that the program has a large volume of training materials that both the Center and school district teams found very useful. Overall, the teams were pleased with the services they were provided. The "pass-through" training did not work as well as specifying the goals for training and allowing the Center teams to develop their own workshops and service delivery methods. It was also found that educators need to see lots of sample assessments that are aligned with state standards, and that changes in classroom practice require support from administrators. Recommendations for program improvement were made based on the findings from both evaluations. (SLD)

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Washington Assessment Professional Development Program Evaluation Results[1] [2]

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[2] This is a compilation of the Executive Summaries from several documents: *Professional Development District Team Survey Results* (July 1997), *CSL Assessment Training Survey Results* (January 1999), *CSL Assessment Professional Development Evaluation Additional Data Analysis of District Surveys* (February 1999); *1998-99 CSL Assessment Site Visit Results* (June 1999); *1998-1999 CSL Assessment District Contact Interview Results* (September 1999), *The Washington Professional Development Program in Assessment Literacy, Final Report* (May 2000). All of these reports are available from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Becky Turnbull, Old Capitol Building, PO Box 47200, Olympia 98504.

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Washington Assessment Professional Development Program Evaluation Results

Program Description

Mission

The mission of the Assessment Professional Development Program was/is to promote the effective use of high-quality state and classroom assessments throughout the State of Washington.

The five-year program funded by the state (1995-2000) was launched to support the comprehensive school reform effort in Washington. The reform effort had/has several related aspects. One aspect was the development and dissemination of content standards. Another aspect involved transforming those standards into new criterion-referenced state assessments and helping Washington educators understand them as thoroughly as possible from the start. The third aspect was to help educators statewide develop the assessment literacy needed to (a) use state assessment materials and results wisely, and (b) develop and use classroom assessments to help students succeed at attaining state standards.

Goals

The assessment literacy professional development program addressed each of these aspects. Specifically, the goals of the program were to help educators

1. Understand the state standards—Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)—as a foundation of sound classroom instruction and assessment
2. Understand and learn to apply standards of quality assessment to day-to-day classroom assessment development and use
3. Develop proficiency in using student-involved classroom assessment, record keeping and communication as instructional interventions
4. Understand the development of the new state assessments—the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)—and how to interpret and use the results.

Organizational Structure

Since 1995, Assessment Training Centers have operated in intermediate service districts and other already-established entities (e.g., the state department of education, Washington Education Association, and district consortia). At the time state support for the effort ended, in 2000, there were 14 such Centers. Centers have been self-supporting since 2000.

The original professional development model emphasized a combination of "pass-through" training of trainers and locally situated collaborative learning teams. For the pass-through component, the state-level project team (state staff, consultants, and contractors) trained Center Teams, who then provided professional development for local school district assessment training teams (District Teams). Ultimately it was the responsibility of the local District Team to train local teachers and encourage the formation of learning teams for the training of its faculty.

To provide the first level of training, the state convened training of trainer meetings for all Center staff two to three times a year. The purpose of these meetings was to share new EALR and WASL developments, review new training materials, and provide helpful insights about assessment literacy development. At the beginning, the meetings placed more emphasis on demonstrating structured training modules to "pass-through" to District Teams. As time progressed, the meetings became more informational, with possible training activities still modeled (by both state and center staff), but presented more as ideas to throw into the training mix created by Centers.

An adjunct to the pass-though modules was learning teams. (In fact, the goal of some of the pass-though modules was to stimulate interest in learning teams.) The majority of learning about classroom assessment would then take place in the context of learning teams. This was actually one of more innovative aspects of the program. Complete materials were provided to local educators to set up and conduct learning teams on classroom assessment.

The mechanisms used by Center Teams to reach out to districts varied greatly from team to team. Each Center sensed the needs of its districts and, within guidelines given by the state, tailored its workshop offerings and other services to those needs. The typical pattern, however, was for Center Teams to follow biannual training of trainer meetings with their own workshops for District Teams and local faculties covering the same material in roughly the same way. This increasingly became interspersed with other services tailored to local needs.

Centers provided other services to client districts besides training—setting up and conducting collaborative learning teams to pursue assessment professional development in depth, technical assistance, and lending libraries. Lending libraries were established for the efficient availability of a broad variety of training materials, information, and expensive training adjuncts such as videos.

Professional Development Content

The content of the Assessment Professional Development Program centered on each of the key facets of the program. As the EALRs and WASL were developed and came on line over the course of the project, materials and strategies were developed and implemented to help educators understand state content standards, the test development process, the nature of the assessments being created, and the meaning of the test scores.

In addition, the program focused on five specific standards of classroom assessment quality, from the Assessment Training Institute (ATI), that teachers would learn to use to maximize the accuracy and usefulness of their classroom assessments. Similarly, ATI procedures and materials for conducting professional development in classroom assessment through the use of building-situated collaborative learning teams were used[3].

[3] Descriptions of the EALRs, WASL, professional development materials developed by the state to help educators understand WASL and the EALRs, and ATI approaches and professional development materials can be found in the reports cited earlier, by calling Beck Turnbull at the state department of education (360-753-6738), or by contacting the Assessment Training Institute (503-228-3060).

Program Evaluation

Description

The program depended on several formal and informal means of gathering information about processes and impact in order to formatively inform content and process decisions:

- A standard evaluation form for each workshop—both those given to Center Teams by the state and those given to District Teams by the Centers.
- Records of numbers and types of services.
- On-going informal collection of information. For example: (1) a pilot of teacher assessment growth portfolios in 1998; and (2) anecdotal reports of impacts associated with the program such as a revision in teacher licensing standards, changes in assessment training in institutions of higher education, and PTA work in assessment literacy for parents.
- Two formal evaluations (1996-87 and 1998-99) of program impact on Centers, districts, and individual educators.

The last two provide most of the "hard" data reported on here and so require more description. These evaluations examined both the service delivery process and the impact of the assessment professional development effort.

Process evaluation information collected included:

1. The amount and nature of professional development services the Centers provided to the districts in their regions.
2. The amount and nature of professional development services the District Teams provided to teachers.
3. The prevalence of the use of collaborative learning teams as a professional development strategy. How these learning teams were set up.
4. The prevalence of training that centered on the *Tool Kits*—compendiums of assessment activities, aligned with state standards, that teachers could use in the classroom.
5. How Regional Centers were set up—philosophy, goals, services provided, staffing, use/modification of materials received from the state, and how configuration has changed over time.

Impact evaluation information collected included:

1. Center staff satisfaction with the training, support and resources provided to them by the state and its contractors. Suggestions for refining future assistance.
2. District client satisfaction with the training, support and resources provided by the Regional Centers. Suggestions for refining future assistance.
3. Changes in the quality of teacher classroom assessments.
4. Changes in the assessment confidence of all participants in the effort—Center directors and staff, district contacts, administrators that participated in training, and teachers that participated in training.

Because of limits on the funding available to conduct the two evaluations, they necessarily had to rely heavily on answers to survey questions. However, each evaluation did have site visit and/or telephone interview components.

Paper and Pencil Surveys. For the 1996-97 evaluation, surveys were mailed to all 286 District Team contacts—those individuals directly served by Regional Centers. The surveys were intended to discover what district contacts thought of the services provided thus far and how this training was being "passed-through" to local teachers.

For the 1998-99 evaluation, paper and pencil surveys were sent to:

- All Assessment Center directors with responsibilities to provide training (N = 11)
- All Assessment Center staff (N = 66).
- A sample of district assessment contacts (N more than 247—some surveys were sent by Centers who did not report the total number sent, only the number returned)
- A sample of principals attending a series of workshops designed just for them (N = 370).

Telephone Interviews. Telephone interviews were conducted only as part of the 1998-99 evaluation. From responses on the 1998 surveys, 20 district training contacts were chosen for telephone interviews. We wanted to know:

1. Under what circumstances cooperative learning teams were most successful. The previous paper and pencil surveys indicated that, in some places, cooperative learning teams were relied on extensively and were seen as being very successful. In other places cooperative learning teams were not used at all. We wanted to find out more.
2. Under what circumstances compendiums of classroom assessments developed by the state (called *Tool Kits*) were successfully used. Again, from the paper and pencil surveys, there was a wide disparity between Centers in the emphasis on *Tool Kits* and perceived usefulness of *Tool Kits*.

The interviews specifically asked both process and impact questions:

- The reasons why cooperative learning teams (or *Tool Kits*) were (or were not) used, barriers experienced and how they were addressed, contextual factors the promoted (or inhibited) use, and advice they'd give others
- How the team learning experience (or *Tool Kit* training) was set up and why it was set up in that fashion
- The impact of the team (or *Tool Kit*) experience on classroom practice. We asked for specific examples

The interviews also asked questions to corroborate (or not) the information collected in the surveys and to gather information that might be related to use (or no use) of teams (or *Tool Kits*):

- District contacts' current understanding of the meaning of quality student assessment and confidence in assessing students well. (Interviewing provided a more reliable measure of impact than self-report.)
- Feedback on the state reform effort in general

- Other assistance district contacts would like to receive

We chose the districts to be interviewed based on their responses to groups of questions on the surveys. Group one was chosen to represent various combinations of degrees of confidence in understanding the characteristics of quality assessment and amount of use of cooperative learning teams. Group two was chosen to represent various combinations of degrees of confidence in understanding the characteristics of quality assessment and amount of use of *Tool Kits*.

Site Visits. Site visits were conducted during both the 1996-97 and 1998-99 evaluations. Site visits took place in seven districts for the 1996-97 evaluation—some that were moving forward comfortably with assessment training and reform and some that were not. The objective was to discover the district conditions that encourage productive professional development. Sites were nominated by Center staff and selected through other informal communication networks. On-site interviews were conducted with district level personnel—superintendent, district assessment coordinator, and district curriculum coordinator. Then visits were made to two or three school buildings to interview the principal and staff. District staff nominated buildings. Each site visit lasted one day.

For the 1998-99 evaluation, the highest resolution (and least representative) picture was taken with site visits. While the previous aspects of the evaluation collected interesting information about various groups' perceptions of the usefulness of the professional development effort, only in the site visits was there an attempt to actually gather impact information. This took the form of (a) examining actual classroom assessments developed by teachers, and (b) observation in the classroom.

Site visits were conducted in buildings nominated by Centers as being sites in which good things were happening and there had been heavy involvement in the professional development effort. Thus, the goal was not to document *typical* impact of professional development on classroom assessment practices. Rather the goal was to document what occurred in some of the *best sites* and what they did to get there.

The two 1998-99 site visits consisted of:

1. Interviews with the principals of each building. Questions included the importance of quality classroom assessment, what happened and why it happened, barriers and facilitators of change, and their knowledge about quality classroom assessment.
2. Observation in classrooms in each building—observing an assessment process in action, plus an interview with each teacher regarding: the assessment observed, the changes in assessment going on at their school, barriers and facilitators of change, ability to articulate characteristics of quality assessment, and confidence in assessing students well. With permission of parents, some students were also interviewed to obtain a notion of the degree and type of student involvement in classroom assessment.
3. Collection of a classroom assessment sample from each teacher in each building willing to share—the assessment plus a description of contextual information. These assessments were

evaluated for quality by Center staff using a set of rubrics designed for the purpose[4]. Center staff members were then invited to draw conclusions about next steps in training.

Because of the limited funding for the evaluation enterprise in general, results should be taken as indicative rather than definitive.

Results

The following are a summary of the findings from all sources of evaluation information.

- The program development a large volume of training materials that both Center and District Teams found very useful.
- Overall, Center and District Teams were pleased with the services provided to them.
- "Pass-through" training did not work as well as specifying the goals for training and allowing Center Teams to development their own workshops and service delivery methods.
- Educators need to see lots of sample assessments aligned with state standards. (This need resulted in the development of grade and content specific *Tool-Kits*.)
- Changes in classroom practice require support from administrators—recognition and support for the importance of classroom assessment as well as the WASL, policies that support the reform effort, and technology that supports more complex record keeping. It is not enough to just include professional development of teachers.
- **Building a sound foundation of basic assessment knowledge made understanding the EALRs, the WASL, and other assessment materials developed through the project team more likely**. Those who studied the WASL, EALRs and other materials without this understanding were not as able to use these things well.
- The most important determinant of how much educators learned about assessment was the depth with which they studied the topic—**those who were in cooperative learning teams learned the most**.
- The state-assessment topics (EALRs and WASL), seeming more immediate and of higher stakes, tended to crowd out the more long term assessment literacy training needed to underpin a standards-based educational environment.

Recommendations

As the result of the accumulation of lessons learned from both formal and informal information sources, major recommendations were made in the project final report (May 2000) concerning guiding philosophy, professional development strategies to continue and discontinue, content to continue and discontinue, and potentially important new efforts. These recommendations included:

[4] These rubrics can be obtained from the sources cited earlier.

1. Sometimes the need to pass on state assessment (WASL) information quickly rendered basic assessment literacy training (understanding the characteristics of high quality assessment and how to use it to help students learn) a lower priority. However, as evaluation results indicated, a basic understanding of high quality assessment was needed by all educators in order to respond most productively to the other aspects of the state reform effort. This "Catch-22" resulted in the recommendation that basic assessment literacy training be separated from WASL information flow. Specifically, the state should discontinue disseminating information about the state assessment through the Centers. Direct communication with districts and buildings is more effective.

2. A balance of emphasis on large-scale and classroom assessment is essential if educators are to respond most productively to the state reform effort. The WASL information flow overpowered attention to ensuring that teachers have the assessment skills they need to develop the high quality, student-involved classroom assessment practices necessary in a standards-based educational environment. Again, this implied the need to separate WASL and classroom assessment training.

3. Local leadership is essential to develop productive assessment environments that maximize school effectiveness/student achievement. Superintendents and principals need to understand the need for balance between large scale and classroom assessment and the need for professional development in assessment. They need to have a vision of what it looks like when assessment systems are balanced and how to create it. So, hand-in-hand with assessment literacy training needs to be assistance with developing comprehensive local assessment systems.

4. Continue producing *Tool Kits* of sample assessments for use in the classroom. But, remember that these *Tool Kits* have less value if teachers don't come to them with a foundational understanding of high quality, student-involved classroom assessment. Without this understanding, teachers tend to use sample assessments in a rote fashion without the ability to generalize.

5. Continue to build partnerships between professional organizations, colleges and universities, the Centers, and others providing professional development in assessment.

6. Be careful with "pass-through" training in which fixed workshops are progressively "taught" to trainers in a pyramid fashion from the original developers to district training teams. It works better to specify the goals of professional development and allow Centers to use provided materials and their own expertise to design training tailored to their own styles and clientele.

7. Learning about assessment best takes place in the context of learning teams. Centers should focus on this professional development option.